

## Call for projects from February 13, 2023

### Interdisciplinary research on the long-term effects of the SARS-CoV-2-pandemic

**Disciplines:** Basic, clinical and translational research, health services research, social sciences, child and adolescent psychiatry.

**Submission date:** 31.03.2023  
**Funding period:** until 31.12.2025  
**Funding sum:** 7.5 million Euros



COVID-19  
FORSCHUNGSNETZWERK  
NIEDERSACHSEN

With "long COVID<sup>1</sup>" and "post COVID<sup>2</sup>" a new type of disease has emerged in the course of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, which poses enormous challenges to the German healthcare system. The prevalence varies greatly depending on the study, ranging from 1-2% to 10-20%. Considering the large number of COVID-19 cases, a high number of long/post COVID patients is to be expected, even assuming low prevalences. The clinical picture of long/post COVID is diffuse, the symptoms are manifold, diagnosis and treatment are correspondingly difficult. In order to be able to diagnose and treat patients effectively, medicine and life sciences are dependent on comprehensive findings on the causes and course of long/post COVID diseases from basic, clinical, and health services research.

At the same time, the societal and social impact of the pandemic is becoming increasingly evident in almost all areas of life and work, and psychological impacts are also on the rise. In order to develop strategies for coping with the consequences of the pandemic, a coordinated bundling of interdisciplinary and complementary expertise is necessary.

Funded by the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture, the COVID-19 Research Network of Lower Saxony (COFONI) was established in 2020 to address the acute course of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic through a coordinated bundling of interdisciplinary and complementary biomedical expertise (<https://www.umg.eu/cofoni/>). Given the multiple long-term impacts of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on individual health and society as a whole, the COFONI research network is expanding to include clinical, health care, and social science expertise and will support relevant interdisciplinary research projects in Lower Saxony.

<sup>1</sup> Symptoms last for four to 12 weeks; <sup>2</sup> Symptoms last longer than 12 weeks and cannot be explained by other diagnoses

### Subject of the project funding by COFONI

Funding is available for interdisciplinary, cross-site research projects in the following areas:

1. Basic and translational research on post COVID
2. Health services research with regard to the long-term impacts of the pandemic
3. Interdisciplinary research on pandemic long-term impacts on living and working conditions
4. Mental health of children and adolescents and their families

(For a detailed description, see Appendix 1 and <https://www.umg.eu/en/cofoni/project-call/>)

### Special requirements for funding

In addition to the scientific originality and thematic fit of the applications, **cross-site cooperation of applicants from Lower Saxony** is a prerequisite and is mandatory for funding. **The combination of interdisciplinary and complementary expertise as well as a high translational potential** are essential decision criteria. In the field of social sciences, the cooperation with biomedical disciplines is desired explicitly, and must be integrated into the project concept, at least in perspective. Interprofessional cooperation between research and practice, for example cooperation with professional societies, associations, health insurance companies or care institutions, can be taken into account.

The research projects must meet high scientific standards, be internationally competitive, and will be reviewed through a quality-assured selection process. Due to the relatively short project duration, existing data/cohorts should be used. The linking of already collected data as well as innovative evaluation aspects should be in the foreground.

The **use of the central COFONI technology platform**, which provides overlapping data and biobanks as well as methods and animal models for shared use (see Appendix 2), is desirable in suitable project proposals and the use of comparable resources outside COFONI has to be justified. For the involvement of the technology platform, the respective contact persons of the technology platform need to be contacted in advance to plan the according budget and resources (see Appendix 2).

### Grant recipients

Eligible for application are the universities of the state of Lower Saxony in accordance with § 2 of the Lower Saxony Higher Education Act (NHG) as well as non-university research institutions funded by the state. A forwarding to industrial partners is not possible. In exceptional cases, national and international research institutions as well as non-governmental institutions in municipal, non-profit or private sponsorship may also be involved. Eligible institutions may cooperate with non-university clinics and health care facilities funded by the state of Lower Saxony.

### Project duration and budgets

Depending on the working hypothesis and the objectives, the duration can be flexible. The project start is planned for **July 1, 2023** with a maximum duration **until December 31, 2025**.

A maximum funding of **800,000 Euros** per project is planned. Depending on the objectives and relevance of the project, it is possible to apply for increased funding with appropriate justification. The work program as well as the required funding must be specified in detail. Therapy studies are only eligible for funding in the context of proof-of-concept studies with demonstrated feasibility within the specified project period.

### Information on the funding procedure

The funding is restricted to the specific project purpose and is provided as fixed-amount funding in accordance with Sections 23 and 44 of the Lower Saxony Budget Code (LHO), including the associated administrative regulations (VV-LHO). The provisions of the General Auxiliary Provisions for Grants for Project Promotion (ANBest-P) and the LHO apply to the disbursement of funds. Further ancillary provisions are the COFONI publication regulations and, in the case of use of the COFONI technology platforms, the respective terms of use. Further information on the funding procedure can be found in Appendix 3.

### Application

Detailed information on project funding and application are available on the homepage: <https://www.umg.eu/en/cofoni/project-call/>

Project applications must be submitted as a PDF file **by March 31, 2023 at the latest** to the following address: [cofoni-lpc@med.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:cofoni-lpc@med.uni-goettingen.de)

### Contact

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### Appendix

Research fields (1)

Technology platform (2)

Funding regulations "Hinweise zum Förderverfahren" (3)